From Parks to Social Infrastructure: The Historical Evolution of Public Facility Provision Standards in the Metropolitan Planning of Melbourne

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ABSTRACT

At the heart of strategic metropolitan planning are 'standards'. The term usually refers to the 'rules, regulations and specifications' that underpin the institutionalized practice of urban planning. Planning standards are used not only to regulate and manage what happens within the built environment but also to improve the quality of life of places within a city. Surprisingly, it is difficult to find much discussion of planning standards within the English-speaking literature on metropolitan planning especially in regard to how they have shaped planning practice, when and why they were devised, how they have evolved over time, plus to what extent historic and place specific factors have come to shape them. This is certainly the case in the Australian context even though this is potentially a very fruitful area of historical investigation. Using the case study of metropolitan Melbourne, this paper explores when and why planning standards that regulated the provision of public facilities made their way into the metropolitan planning schemes of this city, plus why they have changed over time and what implications this may have had for this large Australian city which was recently nominated as the world's most liveable city. The investigation makes a number of key findings. First, the adoption of planning standards in Melbourne was conditioned by locality-specific contingent factors – politics, administrative powers, public discourse and economics – as well as external structural factors - developments in overseas planning practice and the cyclical rhymes in international and national capitalism. Second, different historical phases of the city's metropolitan development gave rise to

differing attitudes towards the ‘status and practice’ of urban planning which directly impacted upon the provision of public facilities to the citizens and communities that could be found in this city. Third, those communities in greatest need for public facilities and services have always suffered the most, as the political and administrative support for their provision has varied over time. The recent rise of neo-liberalism over the last 2 decades in Australia, for example, has meant that successive Victorian state governments have been reluctant to make significant social infrastructure provision commitments in their metropolitan planning schemes for Melbourne. Fourth, the socio-spatial divide that has historically existed between the people who have lived in the central-inner and outer-fringe regions of the city has been allowed to deepen, through the unequal distribution of public urban facilities and services. This has therefore nurtured conflicting perceptions of place and the people who inhabit them in a rapidly polarising metropolitan area. Finally, the paper concludes with a series of policy recommendations that propose to redistribute public facilities and services more equally and thereby improve the quality of life of the outer-fringe communities of metropolitan Melbourne.

Introduction

In comparison to many European cities Melbourne is a relatively young city. Founded only in the early 1830s, it grew quickly after 1851, when gold was discovered in the surrounding hinterland. Melbourne would now be transformed into a modern metropolis. But much has happened in the intervening 150 years. Melbourne is no longer regarded as a city of international significance. In the last 3 decades, Sydney has surpassed it both in terms of population size and economic importance. Surprisingly then, Melbourne was ranked ahead of Sydney and other major cities as the world's most liveable city in 2011 by the Economic Intelligence Unit. The ranking is based on different qualitative and quantitative indicators across 5 broad areas including social stability, health care, culture and environment, educational facilities and infrastructure. Essential to this and any other liveability ranking method must be an attempt to establish whether the citizens of a city have access to appropriately located social infrastructure. This has and only partially continues to be the case in Melbourne.

The citizens of Melbourne are fortunate as they live in a safe and well equipped modern city where health care, schools, good roads, public transport, open space and a wide array of cultural and recreational facilities are generally within easy reach of many. This did not come about by chance but it is the by-product of many years of planning on the part of strategic and social planners working at both the state and local government levels of urban policy-making. It is therefore surprising to discover that there are no accounts of who undertook this urban planning work; to what standards did Melbourne's planners adhere too with regard to the delivery of public services and facilities, plus were these standards devised locally or borrowed from elsewhere. Essentially then, very little to date has been written on the nature and role of planning 'standards' in Australia, especially those that relate to the provision of publicly funded services and facilities in Melbourne.

This conference paper seeks to fill a void in the Australian research record by reconstructing the planning history of Melbourne but from the vantage point of when

social infrastructure delivery standards were incorporated into metropolitan plans of this city. Specifically, this paper will attempt to address the following questions: (1) what form have planning standards taken that are concerned with the provision of community services and facilities; (2) when were they first introduced; (3) what may have been their origins; plus (4) how did they evolve over the last 100 years with respect to the metropolitan development and planning of Melbourne.

Standards: The Hidden Rules and Codes of Metropolitan Planning

At the heart of strategic metropolitan planning practice are 'standards'. The term usually refers to the 'rules, regulations and specifications' that underpin the actual act of plan preparation and regulation. Standards are "...used to determine the minimal requirements to which the physical environment must be built and must perform" (Ben-Joseph, 2005b: 3). "...Standards are...[therefore] set to control the physical setting of the urban area and contribute to ensuring the...welfare, convenience, efficiency and public interest" (Ratcliffe, 1978: 291). They now extend to virtually all facets of the built environment including land use zoning, sub-division, population density, building quality, height restrictions, privacy provisions, configuration of roads, open space requirements, location of public amenities, and so on (Ratcliffe, 1978). Standards are clearly an integral part of a planner's tool kit to design and regulate the built environment but this has not always been the case.

Many contemporary urban planning standards can trace their origins back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's when the pioneers of the planning profession sought to improve living conditions in urban areas which were afflicted with health, safety and allegedly morality problems (Ben-Joseph, 2005a, xiii). Of course, there are examples of much older building and town planning standards dating back to ancient civilisations of the biblical era (see Ben-Joseph, 2005a), but most of our contemporary standards are less than a hundred years old. It is surprising that so little historical research has been undertaken into this facet of urban planning despite its obvious importance (see exceptions Ben-Joseph, 2005a, 2005b; Keeble,

1972; Ratcliffe, 1978; Wilkinson, 1985). What research has been done on urban planning standards has usually been locality based and pre-occupied with land use zoning, the sub-division process and buildings (see Ben-Joseph, 2005b; Delafons, 1969; Hoyt, 1933). None of this work has had an Australian focus. Even less work has been done on standards concerned with the provision of public services and facilities other than a small amount on urban parks and children playgrounds (Granz, 1992; Gold, 1973; Theobald, 1984). Again, there is a discernable gap in our understanding of what has happened in the Australian context, despite a growing interest in the planning history of Australia's cities.

Planning standards dealing with the provision of public services and facilities have been limited in both number and scope. Most have taken the form of so-called 'hard' social infrastructure such as public facilities and buildings which are considered essential to supporting community life. This often included children playgrounds, sporting fields, public parks, kindergartens, schools, libraries, town halls, community centres, baby health care centres, plus other types of recreational and cultural facilities. According to the work of Veal (2008a), public service and facility standards have usually been quantified in four different ways:

1. Fixed ratio – a prescribed level of facility or service provision for a specified number of people. For example, 1 kindergarten is needed for every 3000 people, or 10 acute aged care beds are needed for every 7,000 people aged over 65 years;
2. Area-percentage – a prescribed amount of area is suggested for a specified number of people. For example, 2.83 hectares or 7 acres of open public space per 1000 people, irrespective of where the people might live;
3. Catchment area – a service area has been identified and a set level of facility or service provision has been prescribed. For example, a household located anywhere within a designated neighbourhood should not be no more than 400 metres walking distance from a bus stop or public park;
4. Facility quota – the number and size of services and facilities have been prescribed for different types of residential communities. For example, a neighbourhood should have a children's playground and public garden, whereas a town will possess the

open space facilities of several aggregated neighbourhoods as well as major sporting fields and a large public park.

Imbedded within these specific kinds of planning standards are a host of ideological and technical assumptions which have been increasingly questioned over the last few decades and lead some to suggest that other approaches should be used by planners to decide whether communities are in need of publicly supplied services and facilities (see Gold, 1980; Marriott, 1980a, 1980b; Veal, 2008a, 2008b). It is beyond the scope of this paper to review this debate but it is worth noting that this dissention exists even though such standards continue to influence the decision-making of urban planners.

Melbourne: The Case Study

Melbourne is located in the south-eastern part of mainland Australia within the state of Victoria. It is the 2nd largest city in Australia behind Sydney in terms of population however it is the largest city in the state of Victoria of which it is also the state capital. At the last national census in August 2011, the population count for the city stood at 4,077,036 people, many of who live at very low-densities when compared to European cities. The metropolitan area is 8806 km² (or 3,400 sq miles) and stretches for more than 100 kilometers from south to north making it physically larger than Sydney. Its large metropolitan area is divided into 31 local government authorities that share planning responsibility with the state government of Victoria. The latter devise urban planning policy and overall strategic direction for Melbourne whereas local government authorities modify them for their specific locales and monitor land use development within their respective jurisdictions. Melbourne is typical of many other Australian capital cities as its urban development has been characterized by continual outward sprawl underpinned by the notion of a 'quarter acre block of land and house' for everybody. This, coupled with the popularity of the private automobile after the late 1950s, led to an auto-centric urban structure, with many outer areas being deprived of reliable public transport and adequate public facilities.

The Historical Provision of Social Infrastructure in Metropolitan Melbourne, 1835 to 2010.

The first form of town planning in Melbourne occurred in 1837 by laying out a rectangular grid of approximately 3 miles long and 1 mile wide parallel to the Yarra River. The city grew slowly until the discovery of gold in 1851. Melbourne then expanded quickly in size as it became a gateway to the goldfields and an expanding pastoral hinterland that transported its produce via ship back to England. It was therefore not long before Melbourne began to experience the same problems that had beset many older industrial cities of Northern Europe including a lack of basic public amenities, over crowded housing, poor roads, a need to secure clean water supplies, plus disposing of human waste (Barnett, 1979; Briggs, 1968; Dunstan, 1984; Grant & Searle, 1978). A growth in noxious industries and an inability to effectively dispose of human waste fuelled a fear of cholera and diarrhoea that had already claimed thousands of lives in Britain during the 1860s (Dunstan, 1984).

Amid the ensuing urban growth and public health fears, land just outside of Melbourne's town boundary was set aside for public parks in the 1850s, as a way of countering the unsanitary living and working conditions of its inhabitants by providing them with the opportunity to exercise and breath clean air (Whitehead, 1997). In addition, public parks were also viewed as a place where people from different social backgrounds could mix, a process that could help elevate the manners and morals of the working classes (Granz, 1982; Whitehead, 2005). This initiative was derived from the early English notion of the public park. Together, 11 major public parks including a botanic garden acted as a kind of green belt around the central city (Whitehead, 2005). But decades of public debate over the unsewered city and the rising number of deaths from diseases associated with unsanitatory conditions had not rectified the sewerage problem (see Dunstan, 1984). A royal commission was finally appointed in 1888 and it proposed the building of a metropolitan wide underground sewerage system by a single body not unlike the

short-lived London and Metropolitan Board of Works (Dingle & Rasmussen, 1991). The Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works – hereafter MMBW - was established in 1891 just as a global economic depression descended upon the city and the rest of Australia.

By the start of the 20th century, housing located within central and inner Melbourne had begun to physically deteriorate and the first signs of slum conditions were now apparent, aided by the lingering effects of the 1890s global economic depression that was extremely severe in Melbourne (Cannon, 1966; Davison, 1978). Journalist reports of the time fuelled a growing unease amongst the city's middle classes towards the slums and the people who lived in them (Mayne, 1990). Successive state governments held enquiries into the problem such as the 1914-18 Royal Commission on 'Housing Conditions of the People in the Metropolis' but took little action. Concerned individuals and social reform groups therefore turned overseas for solutions. Some individuals who at this time engaged in the public debates over Melbourne's slums undertook overseas study trips to Europe and the USA attending planning conferences, collected information from foreign publications, organized visits of foreign experts, plus helped form associations that would engage in political lobbying to rectify this problem (Freestone, 2010; Garnaut, 2000; Grubb, 1976b; Ward, 2002).

Agitation to do something about slums had begun during the 1890s and gathered momentum just before the outbreak of WW1 (Russell, 1972). At the centre of the anti-slum movement was the belief that dilapidated and overcrowded housing acted as a kind of contagion that threatened the physical and moral health of the slum dweller. In other words, 'if people are put into a bad environment it will produce bad people. Bad people will make a bad environment worse' (Davison, 1983: 144). The slums were also said to harbour public health problems that could spread to other parts of the city. But of even greater concern was the belief that they were sites of moral degradation. Particular concern existed for the moral and physical wellbeing of children who needed to be rescued from this unhealthy environment. Melbourne's

social reformers turned to England and America where since the 1890s a number of social reform movements – eugenics, the settlement movement, the child saving movement - offered a range of environmental determinist solutions to the problem (Davison, 1983). The more moderate of these reform movements asserted the 'slum child' could be saved by making available free services and facilities inside the slums including children playgrounds, baby health clinics, kindergartens and food programs (Davison, 1983).

Not surprisingly, the first kindergarten was set up in the Melbourne inner suburb of Carlton in 1901 and six years later the first children's playground opened there in 1907 (Davison, 1983; Spearritt, 1974; Whitehead, 2004). The first baby health centre appeared in Richmond in 1917 (Sheard, 2005). By the early 1920s, Melbourne's inner suburbs which housed the city's poor working classes were 'encircled by a cordon' of free kindergartens, playgrounds and baby health clinics, funded by private donations and local municipal councils (Davison, 1983: 161). It is worth noting that these early urban reformers choose to focus public debate on the people who were trapped inside the slums rather than the structural causes of the problem such as the city's poorly regulated capitalist property and labour markets (Gardside, 1988). Out of this middle class reformist zeal would come the first formal planning standard dedicated to the provision of a public facility in Melbourne: the child playground.

By the end of the nineteenth century, children playgrounds had been established in English and American cities, to improve the physical and moral welfare of children (Bird & Garnaut, 2010; Whitehead, 2005). Some were supervised and segregated according to the gender and age of the children. Initially, individual social reformers such as Charles Bean, James Barrett and Madeline Murray had campaigned for their adoption here in Melbourne. By 1912, the Guild to Play had been formed and lobbied for more playgrounds which were subsequently built in working class Clifton Hill, Collingwood, South Melbourne, Port Melbourne and Flagstaff Gardens before the end of WW1 (Apps, 1944; Whitehead, 2005). Many neighbouring middle ring

municipalities would go on to build pubic playgrounds during the inter-war period for their middle class ratepayers and children.

The state government took some time to codify this development in legislation even though a 1915 report by James Morrell to the Victorian minister of public works on planning developments in American and British cities, had pointed out a growing trend in the provision of municipal parks and playgrounds (see Morrell, 1915). It was not until 1922 that the Melbourne Town Planning Commission – hereafter MTPC - was established to deal with the tremendous amount of urban growth that occurred after the end of WW1, but a final report was not completed until 1929. The MTPC was modelled on the American notion of a supra-regional 'city planning commission' that would use the latest planning concepts and techniques devised in America to develop a 'master plan' for Melbourne (Freestone, 2000, 2004; Freestone & Grubb, 1998). The final report was significant not only because it was 'Melbourne and Australia's first comprehensive metropolitan plan' (Freestone & Grubb, 1998: 134), but it also stipulated for the first time a planning standard for the provision of a public facility.

The 1929 report recommended that the following provisions be made for the supply of new public parks and playgrounds:

~ ¼ acre of playground space for every 1000 people

~ a playground to be no further than ¼ mile distance from child users

~ 3 acres of playing field for every 1000 people

~ 1¾ quarter acres of general parkland for every 1000 people

In total, 5 acres had been prescribed of general parks and playgrounds for every 1000 people, a technical standard that could now be used to establish whether different parts of a metropolitan area conformed. Disappointingly, the plan was never gazetted into law by the state government and the MPTC was dissolved, shelving its plan for the next 2 decades. Speculation has surrounded the question of why this happened with some commentators suggesting it was due to the onset of the 1930s Great Depression, the anti-planning attitudes of a conservative state government or a loss

of support from local government councils which feared the emergence of a planning authority that could usurp some of their powers (Freestone & Grubb, 1998; Grubb, 1976a; Lewis, 1995; Sandercock, 1975).

Of greater interest to this paper is the question regarding what were the origins of these open space standards. First impression suggests they came directly from America as part of the 'Americanization' of Australian planning that occurred in the 1920s (Freestone, 2004). Research indicates that American social reformers associated with the US Recreation Movement and the National Playground Association of America had devised distance thresholds, area percentages and population ratios by the start of the twentieth century (Wilkinson, 1985). Closer investigation reveals these concepts had in fact been borrowed from England. Theobald (1984) has found that the distant threshold notion - people should not be more than ¼ mile from open space - can be traced back to the 1880s and a London based organisation known as the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association. Reference can also be found to a ½ mile or 600 yard distance threshold between facilities and worker homes in Ebenezer Howard's book To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform published in 1898 (Mann, 1965).The idea that a town should allocate a certain percentage of its area to open space is to be found in the work of an Englishman, Robert Hunter, who was writing in the early 1890s (Theobald, 1984). Allocating a specified amount of playing space to children has been found in several reports produced just before the start of WW1 by the London Board of Education (ibid, 1984). Hence, the first planning standard concerned with the provision of a public facility in the metropolitan planning of Melbourne was derived from England but refined and transported here via a new technocratic based approach to urban planning that was being developed in America.

Just as the 1890s depression had brought economic hardship and poverty to the people of Melbourne so would the 1930s depression. As in the past, working class households bore the brunt of bad economic times, many of who were living in or close to the already deteriorated inner suburbs of Melbourne. Overcrowded

dilapidated housing was a classic feature of Melbourne's slum areas during this period. Once again, the spectre of slums and their potentially dangerous occupants returned to the public debate, producing a range of responses from the city's middle classes. Some formed themselves into secret para-military organisations ready to quell any political uprisings (Cathcart, 1988). Others joined charitable organisations and distributed outdoor relief to the needy (Mackinolty, 1981). Some sought to document the city's slum problem through research and journalistic reporting such as Oswald Barnett. Then there were others who joined professional groups such as the Victorian Town Planning Association to lobby the state government to act which it finally did in 1936 by setting-up the Housing Investigation and Slum Abolition Board. It produced a damning report into the 'appalling living conditions to be found in these inner suburbs where unemployment was still high. It stressed the dangers of doing nothing about the slums where moral and political unrest was festering' (Dingle, 1984: 220). In response, a conservative state government agreed to establish a quasi-planning housing authority called the Housing Commission of Victoria in 1938, but it achieved little (Sandercock, 1975).

The outbreak of WW11 deflected public attention away from the slum problem even though the Commonwealth introduced rent control provisions as a wartime anti-inflationary measure. Residential rents were frozen at 1939 rates thereby encouraging private landlords to further neglect their already dilapidated inner city rental properties (Nelson, 1980). A new awareness for the need to devise and introduce comprehensive planning standards did not come from the Victorian planning profession or the state government, but a progressive Commonwealth Labor Government determined to eradicate slum housing that had been made worse by the 1930s Great Depression. To achieve this goal, a Commonwealth Housing Commission – hereafter CHC - was set-up that produced in 1945 probably the most comprehensive planning report every produced in Australia by either a commonwealth or state government (Troy, 2010).

In the area of public facility provision, the 1945 final report of the CHC recommended certain facilities should be provided as a 'minimum', at the same time when houses were built and that they had to be within a reasonable walking distance. This included shops, playing areas, an infant health and pre-school welfare centre, meeting hall, plus schools (CHC, 1945: 113). To not provide them, the report remarked, "…any housing development may be a social failure" (CHC, 1945: 113). It is unclear what might have been the basis of this claim but by the late 1930s there were already several well-known English studies on new housing estates and the problems its residents experienced due to inadequate supplies of community facilities, transport and job opportunities (Mann, 1965: 131).The report also recommend 'later-stage' facilities be supplied when the social development of a housing area warranted them including kindergartens, club rooms, small halls to be used for theatres and art exhibitions, a library, gymnasia, youth centre, canteen, swimming pool, adult health centre, religious buildings, children playgrounds and additional sporting fields (CHC, 1945: 113). Unfortunately, a peculiar feature of the Australian political system is that the Commonwealth, neither during war or peacetime, has the constitutional power to enforce its recommendations upon the various states and so many of these innovative ideas were never fully implemented.

Again, it would appear that several semi-official reports issued during and at the end of WW11 in England – the Barlow Commission (1940), the Dudley Report (1944), the New Towns Final Report (1946) and the 1944 Housing Manual – may have had an influence on the range of services and facilities considered necessary by the CHC on all new Australian housing estates (see Goss, 1961; Mann, 1965). Another important English development that now helped shape urban planning in Victoria was the 1944 Greater London Plan. It contained the notion of a 'neighbourhood unit' that has been widely attributed to the inter-war era ideas of American social reformer Clarence Perry (1939). New towns or suburbs were now to be based on the British adaption of Perry's concept of discrete residential communities of 5,000 to 10,000 people who all lived within close proximity to a neighbourhood centre that supplied a range of basic services as well as some 'common' facilities - primary schools, halls,

churches and open space – that would foster a sense of community belonging (Goss, 1961; Mann, 1958, 1965; Mumford, 1954). An aggregation of several neighbourhoods formed a town or suburb which supplied an additional number of retail, commercial, educational and recreational services and facilities.

The notion of a neighbourhood unit was a crucial next step in the development of Victorian planning standards for Melbourne because it was underpinned by a host of service and facility provision requirements. These standards were partly evident in the 1948 metropolitan plan for Sydney and the 1948 Australian lecture tour of Patrick Abercrombe who had embedded them in his Greater London Plan (Carter & Goldfinger, 1945; Howe, 2000). In 1949, the MMBW was given the responsibility of preparing a metropolitan plan for Melbourne, a task it completed in 1954. Drawing upon a range of influences – the 1929 MTPC plan for Melbourne, the 1944 Greater London Plan, the 1948 Sydney Plan, plus the latest data collection and planning analysis techniques from the USA – the 1954 MMBW Plan for Melbourne did not try to arrest the urban sprawl that had once again come to characterize the city's post-war development. Instead, it made recommendations to guide such development by preserving urban farmland as a kind of green belt, set aside land for freeway and recreation uses, plus zone land for future residential development guided by notions of neighbourhood units that would provide new home owners with basic services and facilities (McLoughlin, 1992; Sandercock, 1975).

Less well known about the 1954 MMBW Plan are the numerous recommendations made for the provision of services and facilities which are possibly the most comprehensive ever proposed in Victoria. Using both overseas and local service standards it recommended:

~ 7½ acres of open space per 1,000 people (ie., 3 acres of sporting fields, 1 acre for other sports, 2 acres for parks and gardens, plus 1 ½ acres for children play-grounds). Excluded here are public golf and horse racing courses;

~ 5 acres for a primary school of 500 pupils;

~ 15 to 20 acres for a secondary school of 600 pupils;

~ 15 acres for a technical school of 600 pupils;

~ an infant welfare centre with 1 nurse per 5000 people within ½ mile walking distance from every users home;

~ 5 acres for a 200-300 bed hospital with 7 beds for every 1,000 people;

~ each neighbourhood should have 10 shops per 1,000 people which should be within ¼ mile walking distance for all residents;

~ community retail centres will have 1 ½ to 3 ½ extra shops for every extra 1,000 people whereas larger retail centres should have 5 ½ to 7 shops per extra 1,000 people and a major regional retail centre will have a further 1 ½ to 2 shops for every extra 1,000 people, plus a further 50 to 60 shops;

~ a community centre should be no further than ½ mile from a neighbourhood shopping centre. (MMBW, 1954, Volume 1, pp. 97-165)

Throughout the 2 volume report, the phrase ‘planning standard’ is repeatedly used, as its authors had tried to produce a series of benchmarks that were intended to be used as a guide for providing services in the future growth areas of Melbourne.

Surprisingly, the 1954 Metropolitan Plan for Melbourne was never gazetted into law but implemented as demand required over the next decade and a half through a 1955 Interim development order by a newly elected conservative state government that mistrusted both the urban planning profession and centralised planning. Conservative state coalition governments would go on to control Victorian parliamentary politics for the next 27 years and in the process stifle any genuine attempts to better plan

metropolitan Melbourne. Throughout this post-war period, Australia and Melbourne would experience uninterrupted economic prosperity, not seen since the economic long boom of the 1870s and 1880s. By the mid 1960s, Melbourne had sprawled out of control, forcing a reluctant Victorian state government to now pass the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act of 1968 and finally gazette an out-of-date 1954 MMBW Plan, as well as commission an update. The 1971 Plan – Planning Policies for the Melbourne Metropolitan Region – produced by the MMBW acknowledged the rapid rate of population growth that had and would continue to occur in Melbourne, plus it repeated an earlier recommendation made in 1967 that outward urban growth could be best managed by 'urban corridors'. To some extent, the MMBW at the time was following an emerging trend in Australian urban planning by opting for corridor guided urban growth (Morison, 2000), but it was also a very practical solution to a serious problem. It was simply not possible to finance and supply physical infrastructure -sewerage, water, gas, electricity, telephone– as well as social infrastructure –schools, parks, baby health centres, halls and recreation facilities- to all the rapidly expanding new suburbs at the same time. Instead, if people could be restricted to the proposed growth corridors situated along established transport and service trunk lines, then some of these issues could be reduced. But not everybody had the luxury to decide where they might live especially the urban poor of Melbourne.

Despite two decades of post-war economic growth, there were many people who had not benefited and were compelled to live in cheap housing located amongst the industrial western and northern suburbs of Melbourne, as well as the derelict old inner areas (Henderson, et al., 1970). These housing areas had either always been denied services and facilities or they could not be provided due to the rapid pace of post-war urban expansion. Such discrepancies had been detected between the well-supplied eastern-southern suburbs and the poorly supplied northern-western suburbs of Melbourne. In fact, the 1971 Plan warned the state government that unless this spatial disparity was addressed, there would be an out-migration from the service and facility poor areas to the service and facility rich areas. However, the 1971 Plan

offered few suggestions on how this spatial disparity could be overcome, triggering widespread condemnation for its failure to integrate social and physical planning (McLoughlin, 1992).

In response, the MMBW undertook several studies into the continuing socio-spatial disparities of Melbourne that were being exacerbated by the rising levels of unemployment associated with the 1970s global economic recession. The research repeatedly showed that the working class residents of western, northern and inner Melbourne were in greatest need for more public services and facilities, but they received them at a painfully slow pace. Reduced fiscal resources now lead the state government to question whether further outward urban expansion could be sustained in these difficult economic times (McLoughlin, 1992: 60). The seeds for the need to adopt an urban consolidation approach were now formally sown in the MMBW's Metropolitan Strategy released in 1980. One of the five main focuses of the 1980 strategy was the future delivery of community services and facilities where it was remarked that:

> "…The wellbeing of a community depends not only on the adequate provision of such basic services as water, drainage, sewerage and roads, but also on the quality and availability of such community facilities and services as schools, kindergartens, health services, clinics and welfare offices. School facilities, like other services, are affected by an imbalance of demand and supply…Pockets of need for particular facilities occur throughout the metropolitan area. In particular, the region generally to the north and west of central Melbourne is one such area where the provision of additional community facilities has been seen as desirable" (MMBW, 1980: 40).

Once again, the MMBW had acknowledged a problem with the inter-regional distribution of social infrastructure across Melbourne, but it offered only 'vague platitudes' on how this issue could be addressed (Logan, 1981: 39). Finally, in 1982,

27 years of uninterrupted conservative state government came to an end in Victoria with the election to office of a reformist-oriented state Labor Government. This government started its ten-year period in office with a promise to tackle a long backlog of badly needed policy reforms including the delivery of more urban services and facilities (Considine & Costar, 1992; Costar & Hughes, 1983). Unfortunately, no specific service delivery standards were ever supplied in any official public documents including its metropolitan strategy – Shaping Melbourne's Future – released in August 1987.

Shaping Melbourne's Future was very much a product of the austere economic times that confronted Victoria and Melbourne in the late 1980s. As a metropolitan strategy it set the tone for other strategies that followed it because they would all be preoccupied with the economic wellbeing of the metropolitan region. The Australian economy would take almost another decade to recover from the global economic recession therefore the main themes of this metropolitan strategy was to offer assistance to the private sector by upgrading the highway network, providing more infrastructure for commercial and industrial development, plus deliver public facilities and services in a co-ordinated way to new housing in growth corridors. Disappointingly, the 1987 Plan offered little in the way of any explicit service and facility delivery standards that the community could expect, when compared to earlier metropolitan planning statements and strategies. This is a significant emission from a government that claimed its reform agenda was guided by the principles of 'social justice and equity'.

The global economic recession dragged on into the early 1990s with severe impacts being felt in Victoria and a newly elected neo-liberal state government did little to assist the hardest hit areas - western and northern areas of Melbourne as well as the outer south-eastern areas - that possessed largest concentrations of working class households. Unemployment rose quickly in these areas and they had the greatest unmet need for more public services and facilities. In this context, strategic metropolitan planning was now largely disregarded and pushed down the priority

list, even though the newly elected conservative state Government initially produced a Melbourne Metropolitan Strategy statement in June 1994 (Vic. State Govt, 1994a). Public services and facilities were given only the most cursory mention. An overly economic approach to state management led to the electoral defeat in 1999 and the ushering in of a 'third way' style state Labor government that held office until late 2010. It sought to find a balance between sound economic management with a concern for social and environmental objectives that were spelt out in several post-election policy statements – Growing Victoria Together and A Fairer Victoria. In 2002, it released Melbourne 2030, the first genuine metropolitan strategy since 1987. It was a comprehensive statement of planning intent and offered a wide range of initiatives across nine key areas including the creation of a 'fairer city'. The strategy states:

> "…Melbourne 2030 plans for a fairer distribution of social and cultural infrastructure, and for the better coordination and timing in the delivery of new services in development areas…By working with local communities, gaps will be identified in major social and cultural facilities in areas such as health, education, justice, recreation and the arts. These gaps will then be addressed…" (Dept. Infrastructure, 2002: 39)

Exactly what might be the criteria or service delivery standard that would allow urban planners to decide if gaps did indeed exist across different parts of Melbourne was never spelt out. Many of the remedial initiatives offered to achieve a fairer city are very general in nature and only identify a small number of social infrastructure. This was certainly much better than its predecessor had proposed however there was still very much of a pre-occupation with ensuring the economic wellbeing of the metropolitan area. This largely explains why there was no explicit commitment to spelling out a clear set of social infrastructure delivery standards as the social needs of the community had become a lesser priority for state government in these neoliberal economic times. Hence, it almost seems as if the provision of public services and facilities has become a perennial concern for strategic metropolitan

planning in Melbourne over the last 30 years, however what the precise service and facility delivery standards might now be are never made public anymore.

Conclusions

A number of recurrent themes emerge from the historical investigation undertaken here into public service and facility provision standards for Melbourne. First, the adoption of planning standards in Melbourne was conditioned by locality-specific contingent factors – politics, public discourse and unmet human need – as well as external structural factors - developments in overseas planning practice and the cyclical rhymes in international and national capitalism. Exactly who was in control of the Victorian state government has had a profound impact on commissioning and implementing strategic plans for Melbourne as was shown with the 1929 and 1954 schemes. Throughout most of the 20th century, conservative state governments ruled Victoria and they were reluctant to engage in much urban planning, forcing individuals and reform groups to become involved especially until the end of WW2. The pressure to do something about Melbourne was also conditioned by a fear of 'slums' and the people who lived inside them because it was believed that they could infect the rest of the city with their illnesses and low morals. Slum dwellers could be rescued from their surroundings by a range of initiatives including the provision of publicly funded services and facilities. Surprisingly, middle class reformers and state governments did not explore in any serious way the role that fluctuating economic times had played in the creation of slums, plus the associated problems they generate. In fact, Melbourne expanded as a city in good economic times – 1850s to 1880s, 1920s, 1950s to 1970s – which necessitated some forms of urban planning intervention, but there were also the bad economic times – 1890s to 1910, 1930s to mid 1940s and mid 1970s to 2000 – that witnessed a contraction in urban planning activity. Melbourne, like the Victorian and Australian economies, have always ridden the booms and busts of international capitalism.

Second, Melbourne has always been a socially polarised city, with the poor and working classes initially occupying the central and inner city areas, whereas the upwardly mobile working and middle classes living in middle distant housing areas. As the city expanded, the poorer working class households were pushed out into the western and northern suburbs of the city, as well as the extreme outer edges of the south-eastern suburbs. These communities have historically been and remain in greatest need of public facilities and services but political and administrative support for their provision has varied over time in accord with the rhymes of the economic cycle. The recent rise of neo-liberalism over the last 2 and half decades in Australia, for example, has meant that successive Victorian state governments have been reluctant to make social infrastructure provision commitments in their metropolitan planning schemes for Melbourne. Difficult economic times have contributed to maintaining a faith in neo-liberalism where the economy comes ahead of the social needs of the community. The only discernable change to this spatially patterning has been the extensive gentrification of the inner areas over the last 4 decades that has now become an expensive housing area that excludes the poor.

Third, this socio-spatial division of Melbourne has been allowed to deepen, through the continued unequal distribution of public urban facilities and services. Since the late 1960s, urban planners had been warning successive state governments of the growing socio-spatial inequalities that exist between the western-northern and southern-eastern sides of the city, as this study has shown. Remedial action has been undertaken but at a somewhat slower pace than is possible largely due to the fact that policy priority remains the wellbeing of the metropolitan economy. This has therefore nurtured somewhat conflicting perceptions of place and the people who inhabit them in a sprawling metropolitan area whose inhabitants have seemingly accepted that social polarisation and inequitable access to public facilities and services is an inevitable feature of life in Melbourne. Television programs and films have even been made to lampoon the alleged differences that many assume exist between the people who live in the poor and better off sub-regions of Melbourne. Very little has changed over the last 150 years except the so-called slum housing and

its occupants have been shifted out of the inner city and into the western and northern suburbs of Melbourne as well as some outer fringe areas. It remains to be seen whether new ‘urban social movements’ will arise to counter this situation as had happened in Melbourne between 1890 and 1940.

Fourth and finally, it is clear that something has to be done, even if fiscal stringency has to be observed by neo-liberal state governments. A number of reforms can be considered in order to achieve a more equitable redistribution of public services and facilities, if everybody living in Melbourne is to benefit from living in the world’s most liveable city. This can include a better co-ordination of state government and its various departments in the current and future delivery of such services and facilities; the re-location of public resources from the over-supplied inner and middle regions to the under-supplied western, northern and outer fringe regions that have large unmet needs; a reinstatement of genuine strategic metropolitan planning that accords equal weight to the economic, social, physical and environmental dimensions of the city. Urban planners cannot do this alone unless they have bi-partisan political support from the competing political parties that have to date controlled state government. It has taken Melbourne almost 100 years to re-acquire international standing amongst the major cities of the world but it remains to be seen whether it can hold onto it world’s most liveable city status if more urban public services and facilities are not supplied to its more vulnerable residents.

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